

## Blu-Ray Review: 'X-Men Origins: Wolverine' Devolves Into Self-Parody

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CHICAGO – Hugh Jackman is an awfully likable guy. He oozes the kind of effortless photogenic charisma most movie stars would kill for. He's also comfortable in his masculinity, and unafraid to expose his inner vulnerabilities and self-deprecation. But his considerable charms have been consistently wasted by the limited imaginations of Hollywood, which would rather objectify him as a muscular meathead. Most of his films have flopped primarily because the characters he was assigned to play were so one-note that Vin Diesel would've turned them down.



Blu-Ray Rating: **2.5/5.0**

At last year's Oscar ceremony, Jackman exuberantly threw himself into the night's opening musical number while struggling to keep a straight face. That's the guy viewers want to see onscreen, not the trembling, humorless sourpuss on display in "X-Men Origins: Wolverine."



X-Men Origins: Wolverine was released on DVD and Blu-Ray on September 15th, 2009.

Photo credit: Fox Home Video

It's a wonder that Jackman didn't break down laughing after every take of this picture, which is easily the silliest in many a moon. It takes the one role in Jackman's film career that audiences have positively responded to, and proceeds to hammer it into the ground.





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*Photo credit: Fox Home Video*

Though he easily stole the previous "X-Men" installments, Wolverine had overstayed his welcome by the time this prequel went into production. That may explain why he's constantly surrounded by a host of equally colorful and shallow characters. Wolverine simply isn't interesting enough to be the star of his own movie.

This film's "plot" reads like a parody of every superhero origin story ever brought to the screen. It starts in 1845, with our young mutant hero witnessing the murder of his father, and then slicing the attacker, only to hear him utter, "He's not your father...son!" (insert soap opera sound cue here).

He escapes with his brother, and they partake in a montage of various battle scenes recycled from Hollywood's war movie arsenal. By Vietnam, the 200-year-old "adults" are recruited by Major Stryker (Danny Huston) to join an elite group of mutants on secret government missions. But when Wolverine abandons them and falls for a sexy schoolteacher (Lynn Collins, in a truly bad performance), his brother gets pissed and hunts them down.

With his girlfriend dead, Wolverine swears revenge and undergoes Stryker's procedure to metallicize his bones. But when Stryker orders his memory to be erased, the naked hero escapes to the Superman farm, but then...oh, who am I kidding? This story is just an excuse to see two guys clawing at each other. The phallic symbolism is practically another character in the film, as opponents eye the length of each other's "knuckle blades". (They suffer from serious fingernail envy).



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*Photo credit: Fox Home Video*

Since there's only so many ways to photograph a superhero whose soul power is sprouting blades from his knuckles, the film spins him through a cycle of increasingly ludicrous action set pieces. Some of them are quite funny (particularly the one involving the helicopter), though

the laughter they produce is purely incredulous.

It's a little astonishing how "Tsotsi" director Gavin Hood's gift for creating meticulously nuanced human drama has all but evaporated in big studio projects. "Wolverine" is dramatically inert from the get-go because its protagonist can't die regardless of how many explosions are hurled in his direction. This makes the film's action inherently pointless, not to mention tedious. But the real kicker comes at the end when Wolverine's memory is erased, thus making the entire movie pointless, not to mention maddening! It's enough to make you howl.

"X-Men Origins: Wolverine" sure looks spectacular on Blu-Ray in 1080p High Definition with a 2.35:1 aspect ratio. It is accompanied by English, Spanish, French and Portuguese 5.1 tracks. Every speck of exploding debris can be witnessed with pitch-perfect clarity, but Wolverine's blades begin to look like an appendage better suited for Judge Doom in "Roger Rabbit." Special features include two commentary tracks, various featurettes on the production and adaptation, deleted scenes, four BONUSVIEW tracks, Live Lookup via IMDb and BD Live, and a bonus disc carrying the film's digital copy.

*'X-Men Origins: Wolverine' is released by 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment and stars Hugh Jackman, Liev Schreiber, Danny Huston, Lynn Collins and Ryan Reynolds. It was written by David Benioff & Skip Woods and directed by Gavin Hood. The Blu-Ray and DVD were released on September 15th, 2009. It is rated PG-13.*

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